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Mr. Chairman, members of the subcommittee, fellow panelists, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor and indeed a humbling experience for me to be a participant at this hearing, on the very critical topic of hunger and food aid.

Not in my wildest dreams could I ever have imagined that one day, I would be sitting here discussing an issue very close to my heart that affects millions of people in my home continent and around the world.

How did I get here?

Eleven year ago, I met an American missionary named Ruth Klavano in my hometown of Arusha, Tanzania. It was the first time that I met an American. Ruth was to become my English teacher at Moringe Sokoine Secondary School. She needed to learn Swahili if she was to succeed in her teaching and I needed to learn English. A lifelong relationship developed during many sessions of English and Swahili lessons.

As her contract expired, Ruth invited me to live with her in Vancouver, Washington and attend high school. I was able to graduate and qualify for a scholarship at California Lutheran University to study political science. Following the completion of my bachelor's degree, I was awarded another scholarship to American University where I studied International Development, all under a student visa.

While our meeting might have just been a coincidence, it has transformed both of our lives and the lives of hundreds of other people both here in the United States and in Tanzania. The generosity of Americans has played a key role in my success so far. They have supported me financially, emotionally and spiritually. I have learned about your culture, your hopes, dreams and ambitions and I have shared mine as well.

To me, the generous spirit of America is shown in Ruth Klavano. She was always the first to ask, can I help? She was always the first to know that the borders of this world are only drawn on maps, not in our lives. I hope that I have given back to Americans what I have been privileged to receive from you. I have had many opportunities to speak to different audiences in schools, churches and elsewhere about the challenges that my country and my continent face.

I came from very humble beginnings. I am one of seven children. My family lives in Arusha, Tanzania, a city in the foothills of Mt. Kilimanjaro where the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is located. Both of my parents were lucky to be educated. They instilled in all of us the importance of education. I am happy to say that I was the first one in my family to ever receive a college degree.

All of this was possible in part because of school feeding and food aid. I can distinctly remember going to kindergarten and elementary school and receiving a midday meal of corn meal porridge, tea and biscuits. I ate the meal in my plastic bowl, but I never saw the bags with an American flag on them or got to say thank you, until today. This food kept me in school. It gave me an opportunity to learn and to grow into the person that I am today.

Like all kids, my classmates and I were excited about recess. But we were more excited for lunch time. The warm porridge was very welcome on a cold day. Later in my schooling, my parents were asked to contribute time and money toward the meals program. Other families couldn't contribute financially, but did volunteer in the kitchen.

I am also proud to say that three of my siblings are now completing or enrolled in universities in Tanzania. This is no small feat given the challenges that families face in Tanzania and around Africa. I remain thankful to many Americans who have assisted my family in one or another way.

While the challenges that Tanzanians face are many, I am here today to talk about the challenge of hunger and food insecurity.

In August 1998, the US embassies in my capital of Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, Kenya were bombed by associates of Osama Bin Laden. I believe it is correct to say that most Americans had not heard about Tanzania before that day. Americans, Tanzanians and Kenyans were killed that fateful morning, as were other Americans and citizens of the world four years later on September 11th.

Dr. Martin Luther King once said, "I adamantly believe in the right of people everywhere to three meals a day for their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, freedom and equality for their spirits. I believe that whatever self-involved men tear down, other-involved men, can put back."

We are at a global crossroads. Our security will not be guaranteed while millions of people around the world are living in desperation. There isn't a good justification for why 850 million people do not have enough food to eat today.

Today's hearing is timely and could play a key role in our desire to prevent other terrorist attacks from ever happening again. We know how to end world hunger and some of the misery that stems from it. What we need is the political will to do so. A recent poll done by the Alliance to End Hunger, the organization that I work for, found that 78 percent of Americans want Congress to approve President Bush's proposal to increase funding for Africa and other poor countries to help reduce hunger, poverty and disease. The Alliance has members from various sectors of society, including corporations like Cargill and non-governmental organizations like Save the Children and Counterpart International that have benefited from food aid.

Just as in America, most of what I learned about my culture and society, my values and morals, happened around the dinner table. With many families facing famine in Africa, this great transfer of knowledge and of family values is being lost.

The recent drought in Tanzania created a shortage of food for 3.2 million people. 85 percent of districts were hit by drought. Poor rainy seasons reduced crop production by 50-70 percent. The situation is worse across the border in Kenya and other parts of East Africa. Food aid from the US and around the world averted a major crisis and probably saved hundreds of thousands of lives from death. Hopefully, you and your colleagues in Congress will approve more aid that will save even more lives.

There isn't a more powerful tool of diplomacy than seeing bags of rice or cans of cooking oil marked "A gift from the people of the United States" being distributed in villages all over the developing world. Our shared values, rising from the embassy attacks in August of 1998 and that of September 11, have brought our peoples closer than ever.

Food aid is a critical short and long-term investment, just like the education that my parents wanted for me and my siblings. Food aid creates a healthy nation. A healthy nation is a productive society. I wouldn't be here today, if it wasn't for the nutritious food that I received during my primary and secondary education years in Tanzania.

Since Tanzania qualified for debt relief in 2000 and started to provide free primary school education, enrolment has reached 85 percent. An additional 1.5 million students have joined primary schools. School feeding programs will contribute greatly to the improvement of attendance, academic achievement and the retention of students, especially girls.

According to the World Food Program, only 190,000 Tanzanian children are benefiting from school feeding programs today. These are children from major cities in Tanzania. With 80 percent of Tanzanians living in rural areas, we need to figure out ways to reach children in those areas with food. The United States has provided tens of millions of dollars in food aid to Tanzania through the World Food Program in recent years. For a few of my middle school years in the 1980's, the US provided \$33 million dollars in mostly non-emergency food aid. If that did not end up in my bowl for lunch, it certainly did for some of my fellow Tanzanians.

I am aware of the current debate about food aid reform. However, I will focus my suggestions on three items to make sure our emphasis is on helping hungry and poor children reach their full potential. Our programs should sustainably help people in need. Their welfare is our moral obligation and should be our top priority.

Hunger, poverty and disease lead people into desperation. Food and education can give these people hope. I was happy to hear that the US has signed onto the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's). The first goal is to cut hunger and extreme poverty in half by 2015. Much more needs to be done for this goal to be realized and you hold part of the key in making that a reality.

My current work has involved me with the ONE Campaign. Two million Americans have also signed up with the goal of making poverty history. They are now asking President Bush and this Congress to provide an additional 1% of the federal budget towards the goal of ending hunger, poverty and disease.

Bono of U2 compared this fight to that of ending apartheid or the civil rights struggle of the 1960's. He said, "we have no room to fail, this is what the history books will remember our generation for-or blame us for."

But the ONE Campaign is far more than Bono traveling to Africa to highlight some development success stories on NBC News. Bread for the World, one of the founding partners of the ONE Campaign, is mobilizing people in churches and on college campuses across this country. They and others are engaging their elected officials to say reducing hunger, poverty and disease over there is an important issue over here.

One of my hopes is that this Congress will keep President Bush's promise to increase poverty-focused development assistance by \$25 billion dollars over the next five years. In order to honor his word, and meet this goal that was established at the G8 Summit, Congress needs to approve a \$5 billion dollar increase this year.

My second hope is that this Congress will increase support for school feeding programs like the one that benefited me. The George McGovern-Bob Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program has proven itself a huge success. Your support for expanding this effective program that changes young lives is crucial.

This committee was instrumental in authorizing the McGovern-Dole Program in the 2002 farm bill. I and others sincerely hope that you will play a leadership role in the next farm bill. School feeding is not the only solution to development problems, but it is one of the most proven and effective interventions for helping people help themselves.

Finally, I would hope that this Congress would strengthen response mechanisms to international famine. Unfortunately, responses often come after images of starving children appear on television. The Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust, named after one of your former colleague and a true hero for the hungry, exists to prevent famine. Please assure that the Trust is sufficiently funded, with an automatic replenishment system. Currently the decision makers hesitate to use it, because the needs far exceed available resources. Also an international famine relief fund, under the auspices of the World Food Program, should be considered.

Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for this opportunity to share my story and these thoughts. The decisions you make today affect the leaders of tomorrow in very real ways. I hope and pray that other children of Africa will have the opportunities that I have been given.

Thank you.

The Alliance to End Hunger is comprised of 35 organizations and individual partners. The mission of the Alliance is to engage diverse institutions in building the public will to end hunger, both in the United States and around the world.

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